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Midwinter Birds at Barstow.

BY JOSEPH GRINNELL.

THE SIXTH of January, 1901, I spent at Barstow, a Santa Fe' Railroad Station on the Mojave Desert of southeastern California. The country in this vicinity is hilly and particularly barren of vegetation. All the birds observed were along the Mojave River, at this date merely a creek, which one could clear at a jump. Along this stream are stretches of alkali grass flats, with here and there thin willow patches and scattered cottonwoods. The day was very windy, and consequently rather unfavorable for collecting. Perhaps 175 birds were seen altogether during the six hours of active observation. These consisted of the following thirteen species.

1. **Accipiter velox.** Sharp-shinned Hawk.
One individual seen among the cottonwoods.
2. **Colaptes cafer collaris.** Red-shafted Flicker.
One individual,
3. **Sayornis saya.** Say Phoebe.
One individual flying along the River.
4. **Sturnella magna neglecta.** Western Meadowlark.
A single silent individual flushed from a grassy meadow by the River.
5. **Carpodacus mexicanus obscurus.** House Finch.

The House Finches were the most abundant of the birds at Barstow. They kept for the most part close about the buildings in the manner of English Sparrows. But a few were to be found in the reed patches of the River bottom. Both these and the Gambel Sparrows had probably been in this vicinity constantly for many weeks, for they were much blackened with coal smoke. Their general appearance from a distance was thus so different from the ordinary that I at first shot several when partly obscured among the brush, thinking them some unfamiliar species. The specimens secured are uniformly and evenly blackened over the whole plumage, the resulting coloration being quite odd. In a male House Finch the parts of the plumage normally red are a deep burnt carmine color. In an adult Gambel Sparrow, the anterior parts have a dark plumbeous caste. This sootiness of plumage has been previously observed in several species taken about smokey railroad towns. (Cf. McGREGOR, *Condor* II, Jan. 1900, p. 18). I am tempted to believe that the *Parus gambeli thayeri* (BIRTWELL, *Auk* XVIII, April 1901, p. 166), described from Albuquerque, is based on just such adventitious characters.

6. **Zonotrichia leucophrys gambeli.** Gambel Sparrow.
Fairly common in the brush of the River bottom.
7. **Anthus pensylvanicus.** American Pipit.
One individual at margin of the stream.
8. **Thryomanes bewickii drymœcusc.** [Vigors Wren].
The single specimen secured appears to be quite like birds from the San Joaquin-Sacramento Valley, and was evidently a winter straggler to this locality.
9. **Sitta carolinensis aculeata.** Slender-billed Nuthatch.

I was heedlessly striding along a desolate wash, making for a distant clump of bushes, when I was abruptly recalled to attentiveness by a succession of sonorous raps, startlingly plain even above the swish of the wind. Tracing this woodsy sound over into the next arroyo, I located the drummer, diligently pegging away at the stretched hide of a dessicated horse carcass. Here the forlorn bird was evidently trying to strip a meal from this impregnable cache of natural jerky. I

watched him awhile; but, pitying the poor Nuthatch lost in this land of starvation, I humanely secured him from further privation. Which even a tender-hearted Audubonist might not have done!

10. *Auriparus flaviceps*. Verdin.

Two specimens were obtained and three others seen, in each case keeping shyly to the cover of the thickest bushes. The only notes heard were faint attenuated ones, like the repeated "tsip, tsip" of the female Anna Hummingbird. Verdins' nests were numerous wherever there were thorny bushes, being situated from one to eight feet above the ground. There were sometimes three in a single bush. These nests are very durably constructed and must last many years, thus accounting for their abundance as compared with their builders. The walls consist of firmly interlaced twigs from the thorn bushes. The nests are flask shaped, resembling miniature cactus wren's nests, but fixed among the supporting branches with the opening rather more downwards than to the side,

11. *Regulus calendula*. Ruby-crowned Kinglet.

A lone ♀ obtained.

12. *Merula migratoria propinqua*. Western Robin.

Two individuals were flushed before sun-rise from the margin of the River.

13. *Sialia mexicana occidentalis*. Western Bluebird.

Two flocks, of 8 and 13 respectively, were noted flying down the valley high overhead.



Some Winter Notes From Marin County, Cal.

BY JOSEPH MAILLIARD, SAN GERONIMO, CAL.

THE PAST winter has been remarkably mild for this vicinity. We have had abundance of rain but very little cold weather. Instead of periods of frosty mornings, when the registering thermometer would show a minimum of any where between 12° and 22° day after day, there have been but few severe frosts and then only for two or three days at a time. This mildness seems to have affected the bird life to a considerable degree.

Some species which are seldom seen here in winter have been comparatively common. In my list of land birds of Marin County, (THE CONDOR II, No. 3) Thick-billed Sparrows, (*Passerella i. megarhyncha*), and Townsend's Solitaire, (*Myadestes townsendi*) are mentioned as occurring only in very cold winters. The past winter has proved an exception to this rule, as the former species was here in limited numbers and the latter was more numerous than ever before noted. This state of affairs may have been occasioned more by the

heavy snow-fall in the Sierras than by the mildness of the temperature in this locality.

The Western Evening Grosbeak (*Coccothraustes v. montanus*), seems to have been quite common all along the coast this year and several small flocks were noted about here and in San Rafael. Golden-crowned Kinglets (*Regulus s. olivaceus*) have been very numerous and several specimens of each sex have been taken, whereas my last record of this species in midwinter was in 1895. Heretofore observation has led me to believe that most if not all, of the Ruby-crowned Kinglets, (*Regulus calendula*) wintering here were ♂ ♂, as I had never taken a ♀, but this winter has been an exception to this rule also, as the two sexes seem to have been about equally represented.

Owing to the fact that the San Geronimo Valley is usually much colder in winter and spring than the adjacent country on the eastern side of the compassing hills, many spring immigrants